

REMARKS

Applicants' attorney wishes to thank the Examiner for the careful consideration given to this application. For convenience, the matters raised in the Office action are discussed below in the same order as presented by the Examiner.

Initially, the allowance of claims 1 and 2 is acknowledged.

The rejection of claims 3 and 5 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, has been overcome by amendment. Specifically, claim 2 has been amended to depend from claim 3 and claim 5 has been amended to depend from claim 4.

The rejection of claims 4, 5, 12 - 14, 16 - 18, and 20 - 22 under 35 USC 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,344,693 to Sanders is in error and, in any event, overcome by amendment.

These claims are discussed below.

Claim 4 has been amended to specify more clearly that slitting is through the masking along the said at least one continuous line. Sanders does not teach such a slitting step. In fact, Sanders actually teaches making a weakened joint, such as longitudinal joint 58 in the substrate 45. Accordingly, Sanders does not

contemplate slitting through the masking along the said at least one continuous line.

It is further submitted that Sanders does not disclose or suggest "printing said adhesive-inhibiting masking to define a masking pattern comprising at least one continuous line". In the discussion of FIGS. 10 and 11 at column 5, Sanders notes that the substance carries a pattern of non-adhesive, preferably thermoplastic or ink, spacers 63 which may be applied by a printing process. Thereafter, Sanders states at column 5, lines 13 and 14, that:

"It will be appreciated that the spacer

63 may comprise profiled elongate members."

Accordingly, Sanders only contemplates printing ink for discontinuous spacer 63 and not continuous line members as in the claimed invention.

For the foregoing reasons, it is requested that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 4 and 5.

The rejections of claims 12 - 14 is overcome by amendment. Specifically, claim 12 has been amended to recite that the roll stock has a uniform thickness from edge to edge with the masking having a thickness in the order of microns. For the Examiner's convenience, it

is noted that this is supported at page 10, lines 29 - 31 of the application.

Sanders does not teach masking applied to the exposed surface of the adhesive layer "along a continuous machine direction line or zone extending across a portion of said width of said exposed adhesive surface to form a non-adhesive line or zone". As noted above, Sanders only teaches the use of printing in connection with the discontinuous spacers 63. In comparison, the spacing means or spacers in Sanders otherwise have a thickness dimension equal to at least a significant, if not a major, portion of the thickness of the substrate. Accordingly, Sanders does not contemplate a masking pattern in accordance with the invention to achieve uniform roll thickness edge to edge with attendant advantages to the manufacture and converter. These advantages are particularly described at page 3 of the specification in connection with the provision of stock for diaper tabs.

For the same reasons as set forth above, claims 14 and 15 are distinguished over Sanders.

As to claim 14, Sanders does not teach or suggest "masking... along a continuous machine-direction line or zone" wherein the "roll stock has an edge thickness substantially equal to the average thickness of the

roll stock across its width." In the continuous spacer embodiments in Sanders, the spacing means are provided with a height that is equal to a substantial fraction of the substrate thickness.

It is submitted that Sanders does not anticipate claim 15 wherein the masking is applied in a continuous line or zone at each of the side edges of the substrate to provide pick-free edges. The advantages of the same are discussed in the paragraph beginning at page 4, line 22 of the specification. Accordingly, it is submitted that Sanders does not disclose this structural feature nor the advantages achieved thereby.

For the same reasons as set forth above, Sanders does not meet or suggest claims 16 - 18.

The rejection of claims 20 - 22 is overcome by amendment. More particularly, claim 20 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 19 indicated to be allowable by the Examiner. Accordingly, claims 20 - 22 are also allowable.

The rejection of claims 12 and 20 - 22 under 35 USC 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,980,676 to Meetze is in error and, in any event, overcome by amendment. These claims are discussed below.

The width of the pressure-sensitive adhesive layer is substantially equal to the substrate as set forth in

claim 12. Meetze does not disclose such a configuration. The Examiner acknowledges that Meetze fails to disclose such a structural feature and, accordingly, Meetze cannot be deemed to anticipate the claim. It is further submitted that the Meetze teaching contemplates a tape having a longitudinal lifting edge. Accordingly, it is contrary to the teaching in Meetze to provide an adhesive layer having a width substantially equal to the width of the substrate.

The rejection of claims 20 - 22 is overcome by the amendment of claim 20 as noted above.

It is respectfully requested that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claim 15 under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Sanders as applied to claim 13 above in view of Meetze. This rejection is discussed below.

Initially, it is noted that claim 15 depends from claim 12 which has been amended to indicate the roll stock to be of substantially uniform thickness from edge to edge with the masking having a thickness in the order of microns. Sanders does not contemplate masking of this characteristic in a continuous machine-direction line or zone as discussed above.

It is further emphasized that Meetze does not disclose or suggest the provision of such a uniform thickness roll stock. Again, it is emphasized that Meetze contemplates a longitudinal lift edge provided by the absence of adhesive. In addition, Meetze does not contemplate a continuous line or zone of masking at each of the side edges of the substrate. There is no suggestion of such an arrangement in Meetze. Moreover, the obvious modification of Meetze to achieve a lift edge at each side of his tape is to eliminate adhesive at the side edges.

For all of the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims presently of record are in condition for allowance and such action is requested.

If there are any further fees required by this communication not covered by an enclosed check, please charge the same to Deposit Account No. 16-0820, Order No. 26651US10.

Respectfully submitted,

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